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ABSTRACT

Discussion by Native American community groups of the design of relevant curriculum is encouraged through reading this paper, working on suggested activities and questions, and applying the information to improve local situations. Wholistic curriculum is compared to the tradition of how to perform a sacred ceremony, a description of what is to be learned and how it is to be taught, and a starting place of unfolding human potential. Involvement of family and community as well as school in generating curriculum is emphasized and the advantages of traditional native education are discussed. Examples of a wholistic curriculum based on the family are given including day care opportunities and family development program. A reading list and numerous quotations by historical and contemporary Native Americans are provided. (LFL)

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The Four Worlds Development Project is the result of many people's efforts and wisdom. Some were directly involved, others inspired us through their work in education and alcohol and drug abuse prevention.

Direction for this project was set at a conference held in Lethbridge, Alberta in December, 1982. Participants at the conference were native elders, spiritual leaders and professionals of various native communities in North America. Their contributions were framed by their deep commitment to native people and their own, often hard won, experience. To each of them we offer our deepest respect and appreciation.

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Editorial note:

In English it is impossible to refer to a person without using a pronoun that indicates gender or sex (e.g. he or she, him or her, his or hers). Since there is no special word to refer to a person whose gender is not known, most writers have chosen to use the masculine form in these situations.

This custom of using the masculine form when referring to a person who is not known to be a female, has caused a conspicuous absence of reference to women in English writing.

Thus all of the great ideas and discoveries discussed in English literature are expressed in masculine terms and the reader constantly visualizes males, rather than females, as active participators in the world. Our society's tendency to devalue the role and contributions of women is only augmented by this lack of picturing women in an active creative role.

The Four Worlds Development Project has chosen to alternate the use of feminine and masculine pronouns whenever the reference is unspecific. This choice of usage is a deliberate one to avoid the the awkwardness of the compound form (he/she; him or her) while at the same time acknowledging the harmful consequences of bowing to a convention that persistently forces its audience to visualize the world as dominated by men and operating on ideas expressed in masculine terms.

Introduction

This series of discussion papers has been especially designed for small community groups; we call these "core groups". Our aim is that as people learn more about themselves and their community, they will want to get involved in creating new options, new patterns of personal and community dynamics, and in short, in promoting the ongoing process of human development in themselves and their community.

The core of anything is the heart and center of that thing. The core of a human development process is the people who, by their unity of vision, their personal commitment to growth and their leadership (by example) form the pattern around which other people cluster as positive changes take place in the community.

The Four Worlds Project promotes the development of core groups which will engage in discussion on the possibility of individual and community transformation, and conduct action-oriented research on aspects of personal and community life. It is anticipated that this group will, in some sense, establish new structural patterns around which the life of the community can organize itself--patterns that are more life-preserving, life-enhancing and development-promoting than those currently being utilized.

The core group, as it gains clarity of vision and takes action on that vision, will attract others who will also participate in the learning-transformation process. The fundamental strategic problem is not whether core groups can have such an influence. That they can is an established fact in a wide variety of case studies on social change. The challenge is twofold. The first problem is to tease out of obscurity and isolation in any community of learners those individuals who are in some way already facilitators of the organic change process in the community. The second task is to unite the hearts of these individuals in a common vision of human possibility that transcends social and political barriers to positive understanding and collaboration.

It is with the goal of helping individuals and communities face these two challenges that this discussion series was prepared. Accept them as your own and use them in whatever way you feel will be appropriate and effective.

We envision a process in which a group facilitator helps the group go through the text together, stopping frequently to discuss the points that are made. The activities and discussion questions can be used to help review what has been learned, to explore some aspects of the discussion more fully, and to apply what you have learned to your own situation and community. Much of the material can be read aloud (either by the facilitator or by various members of the

study group in turn) so that people are not limited by their reading ability in their efforts to understand the material. We anticipate that a natural outcome of this discussion process will be that the group will decide to take action in the community.

This series is just an experiment. It is not meant to be a final product. Let us know what you think, what you liked and what you didn't, and what helped you learn and what didn't. During the next year we hope to develop a set of video tapes to go with the series and maybe produce some more discussion papers to develop some of the ideas further. We need you to help us make this project a success.

It is my deepest prayer that with every
new sunrise we can recognize more and more
that the most sacred and holy of all the wonderful
ceremonies that the Creator has given us is
the birth of a child and that everything
that can be done in providing our children
the best education possible, physically,
mentally, emotionally, and spiritually,
is a sacred gift and responsibility.

Phil Lane, Jr. (Yankton Sioux and Chickasaw)

Probably the first thing the Indian child is made aware of is the mystery of existence. He learns this first and learns how to build a house second. His whole learning process is begun only after becoming aware of the mystery of all that is around him, strictly from a feeling point of view. He is encouraged to do this, and later, when he learns about specific things, he recognizes the spirit force within them.

Allen Quetone (Kiowa)

Sacred Ceremonies

One of the most precious gifts traditional Native education passes on from one generation to the next is the knowledge of how to perform sacred ceremonies.

Often life itself hangs in the balance during ceremonies because the medical arts and spiritual teachings are understood to be intimately connected. Whether a person survives a serious illness or injury can depend largely on the outcome of a ceremony.

The person who performs the ceremony is someone who has undergone religious, spiritual, mental and physical training. The knowledge of the tradition which told how to perform the ceremony is extremely important, but that knowledge by itself is only one component of a very intricate process.

Other important components include the level of spiritual and technical competency of the individual who performs the ceremony, the attitude of the other participants, the physical environment, and as well the social and spiritual environment shaped by recent events in the life of the community. All of these things have to be integrated and harmonized. The performer of the ceremony cannot accomplish the harmonizing of all of these factors by herself. Everyone in any way connected to the ceremony has a part to play. It is as though a silent communication between

hearts and minds has to be carried out until a consensus of unity and healing is reached.

What is Curriculum?

True curriculum (this is, one that fosters the development of the whole human) is something like the tradition of how to perform the ceremony. It is a description (not a prescription) of what is to be learned and how it is to be taught. What comes out is, in each instance, a new creation. As in a ceremony, every participant is vital. And as in a ceremony, the communication between hearts is as important as the communication between minds.

The process of unfolding that new creation is what we mean when we say curriculum. We are not talking about a document, we are talking about a dynamic; a process of human interaction, a dialogue between educators, children, their parents, the community and the educational plan usually referred to as "the curriculum". The educational plan itself is not chiseled in stone either. It is an organic, and hence developing, reflection of our best understanding of how to promote human development. Parents, educators, community members and, most especially the learners of whatever age, become the co-developers of the educational plan. Indeed, the plan is only a starting place for a process of human interaction to foster the unfolding of human potential. A

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wholistic approach to education and its role in creating and maintaining wellness does not allow for the separation of the various components of education without recognizing their interactive relationships to each other and to the overall aims of the education system.

As such, curriculum consists of what we teach, when we teach it, how we teach, who we teach, who the teachers are, the community in which we teach, the life of the student outside of school, the buildings and the rooms in which we teach, and all other factors which influence learning.

In addition to creative and intellectual development and the social and economic opportunities achieved through quality education, we must also assure that our curriculum, both content and process, develops and supports those psychological factors which enable a person to avoid dependency problems. Of course, these factors have implications for the well-being of the individual far beyond enabling him to avoid alcohol and drug abuse. They constitute the very heart and soul of health, wholeness, and happiness. Briefly summarized, these traits include: a secure self-image, the experience of being loved and belonging, the ability to receive and give love, and a sense of purpose and meaning.

A person who is physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually healthy does not indulge in behaviors which are

destructive to self or others.

This state of "wellness" which a wholistic curriculum strives to develop, maintain and enhance is an ongoing, dynamic quality. It cannot be taken for granted, and once achieved, it does not necessarily continue without conscious effort. The elements that combine to create "wellness" in the newborn are different than those of the child of three, the child of twelve, the adolescent of sixteen, or the adult of forty-five.

Based on as complete a picture as traditional knowledge and modern science are able to give us of what a human being is, we as parents, teachers and guides must at all times respect and support the unfolding of the physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual person that the child is. Moving, feeling, willing and thinking must all be nourished and harmonized.

Such a wholistic curriculum will enable people to become the fullest expression of their human potential in all aspects (physical, emotional, mental and spiritual) of their being. Because the problems associated with abuse affect children at all ages, and because the total life curriculum of the child includes the mother bond, family, community, and peers, the curriculum needs to recognize the in-school and out-of-school learning processes of the child by spanning the pre-natal to Grade 12 years, as well as offering information

and support to parents and the community at large.

The Community Development Dimension

To propose a change in curriculum as a solution to the "alcohol problem" in Native communities would be shortsighted and even naive if we were merely talking about a change in what goes on within the walls of the school building.

Everything which stimulates learning and development in the child (or in the community) might be termed "curriculum". In that sense we can speak of the total life curriculum of a young child.

As much as ninety percent of all learning in early childhood is not done intentionally by professional educators or parents. Learning is the natural dynamic of the life process of developing human beings. Fish swim, birds fly and the human being learns. Educators and parents can best help children by being aware of this process and supporting it.

A whole generation of Native children today are learning from the elders, from their parents, from their older brothers and sisters, from their aunts and uncles, from their neighbours, and from the general atmosphere of life in the community. But what are they learning?

If a child lives with abuse, anger, fear, frustration,

dishonesty, insensitivity and hurt, that child will grow up to be an abusive, angry, fearful, frustrated, dishonest, insensitive and hurt human being.

On the other hand, if a child is raised in an atmosphere of love, is instilled from infancy with a sense of awe and wonderment for the Creator and His creation, is treated fairly and truthfully, is encouraged and supported in the risk-taking so necessary in human development; if that child sees her elders being strong of body and pure of heart, then she too will reflect, in her adult years, those same life-enhancing qualities, and she will pass them on to her children.

At this writing, a whole generation of Native children are learning everyday from television. They are learning from its potent, materialistic "hype", from its indiscriminate violence, from its mindless consumerism and from its amoral and anti-spiritual ethos that a "real man" and a "real woman" are opulent materialists who routinely perform gross acts of physical or psychological violence against themselves or others. They are learning that to <u>have</u> is to <u>be</u>; to consume is to live. They are learning that it doesn't much matter what you do as long as it feels good.

Traditional Native Education

Yet many Native children still accompany their elders to the land for hunting, trapping and fishing activities. It is in this setting, close to the earth and to traditional harvesting activities, that the closest thing to Native traditional education still continues today.

Here, entire days pass without a word being spoken. Here, to fail to learn may be to die. Young eyes watch intently as their elders perform age old tasks, (educators call this method of instruction "modeling") and here, young hearts grow stronger and young minds acquire great discipline through the rigors of daily survival.

While many Native communities have lost the use of their traditional languages, many have not. And even those communities that use English as their main language are still very much influenced by the ways of "thinking the world" (cognitive processing styles) and the ways of communicating with one another (social interaction patterns) that grow--like a tree grows out of the ground--from the soil of native language and culture.

Children growing up in a Native community learn how to be in the world, how to communicate with other people, and how to interpret reality in a uniquely Native way, a way that is different from the way Euro-Canadians or Chinese Canadians

Yet we have our elders to give us guidance. They have no university education, but they have a lifetime of understanding and wisdom to offer us.

Marie Smallface Marule (Blood)

Yet we survive, and we will continue to make progress in the face of serious obstacles so long as we build on those traditional values that our elders have taught us.

Sykes Powderface (Stoney)

....all those old chiefs, who have gone to the spirit world, also were an inspiration to me in discerning what is right and what is good. They were the ones who told us to have dignity. If it were not for the teachings of grandma and grandpa and those old leaders who never went to school, not even kindergarten, who were called "illiterates" by Canadian and American experts, I would not have learned what is right and what is good. So I want to acknowledge them as the basis of my thoughts.

Tom Porter (Mohawk)

Our elders are the backbone of the Indian nations. Today, they look to the young Indian leaders for the continuing survival of our people, for maintaining and preserving our culture and our lands.

Chief Earl Old Person (Blackfeet)

or Afro-Canadians do. That difference is what we mean when we say Native culture. Within that unique way of thinking and acting on the world that we call Native culture are to be found the essential values about life which constitute the starting place for a wholistic community education curriculum for Native communities.

The Future of Native People

The Native people are at an extremely critical juncture in their history. Whether they will survive at all, as a people or otherwise, will be decided in the next several years. Perhaps the same may be said for everyone on planet earth.

What is unique about the Native circumstance is the flexibility they still enjoy to create new alternative approaches to the basic survival questions they must face. This flexibility is born out of their recent historical past.

For at least 40,000 years (according to archeological findings), the Native people in Canada were expert survivors in one of the harshest environments on earth. Only during the past two hundred years have people lived together in settlements and reservations.

In raising a child, we feel that language is of prime importance in getting the child to establish a behaviour pattern. After marriage, and even before marriage, young women are taught to sing many lullabies and songs so that they will use these songs after the child is born. My people claim that this is one of the ways women start to develop a child's mind - the child's mind is formed through hearing the words of its language.

Victor Sarracino (Laguna Peublo)

Now in those days, the Bureau of Indian Affairs was trying to destroy our culture. We couldn't talk our own language, Navaho. Every time the principal or one of the employees heard us talking Navajo, he punished us. We were not to talk in our own language, or sing, or go to any kind of ceremonial. You had to forget all this. It was very compulsory.

As time went on, somehow they'd found out--through education, through philosophy--that it's not good for the Indians if the schools take away whatever they believe. They have to stay with it. So this is what our brothers, the white people, now say: "This is not good for them." The other side is turned around. They've found out what's good for us!

Today they claim there is a gap. They want us to fill this gap through Indian education. Yes, we can fill these gaps and make them smooth. So let's work together, whites and Indians.

Max Hanley Sr. (Navajo)

As a consequence, there has been much to learn because what has been happening is that people are working out entirely new life-ways. Native culture is evolving. To some extent this process has been conscious and intentional. To a larger extent it has not. In any case, the Native people are still not completely locked into the political, social and economic patterns of industrialized societies. This permits a much higher degree of flexibility in choosing social, cultural, and economic alternatives than is enjoyed by the majority of Canadians.

Today, Native people are discovering that culture is a living thing and like all living things, it moves and changes and grows. Until very recently, the changes Native cultures were undergoing were largely due to influences from outside the Native communities. But today an important realization is dawning.

Native people all over North America are realizing that they must step into the driver's seat of their own cultural evolution. They are realizing that the doorway to the process of ever unfolding human potential must be unlocked from inside the Native communities by the Native people themselves.

This ongoing cultural development is essentially a

It's interesting to observe the difference between young Indians who have stayed close to their roots and those who have left their families and homes and gone away to school or college. There's a kid who lives next door to me who is my nephew. He has lived on the reservation all his life and been involved in all kinds of traditions. He went to the high school on the reservation, where the Indian enrollment must be 95%. He's never worried about his identity, about whether or not he is an Indian.

He's at Western University now. During his second year, he became president of his fraternity. He still is, and next year he'll be a senior. For the past three years he's worked at IBM's Data Processing and his boss told me privately that when he finishes Western University, he will offer him a job as Assistant Vice President at IBM. Here's a kid who has never been outside the reservation, but who has just gone on with his studies.

On the other hand, a lot of his Indian friends at Western were away to public schools and lived in the city. Now they are having problems because they are trying hard to prove they are Indian. It has kept them from their studies and their regular college work. My nephew has just stuck with his college work and gone right on through. I've heard him say, "Some of my friends are in Indian clubs, Indian studies, and so on. I know all that. I just want to learn what I need to learn in college." You see, he didn't have to prove that he was an Indian. That was the least of his worries, because he knew who he was all the time.

Victor Sarracino (Laguna Pueblo)

learning process, and along with the education of children, it constitutes the means by which a new vision of human possibility is being actualized in Native communities.

> ....mind if I say something? In just about every school I have visited that is teaching Indian courses--colleges, high schools, and probably some elementary schools--the staff are trying to categorize the Indian culture. But among my people, the Crow Indians, you can't categorize the social or religious life of an Indian the way the white man does, because everything is interwoven; it's all one ball of wax.
>
> I was just sitting, listening and thinking about the agenda you have here. How am I going to separate Indian beliefs and tell about one way over here and another way over there, like name-giving, childbirth and all that? Because everything is connected, and our belief enters into every aspect of our life.
>
> Henry Old Coyote (Crow)

Human Development

Any curriculum transformation that is aimed at addressing the root causes of alcohol and drug abuse in Native communities must be a "life-world" curriculum. What is meant by this is that all aspects of the lived world of a child are teachers to that child. This means that in considering a comprehensive curriculum for human development, the family life, the spiritual climate of the community, the physical environment, economic activities--all of these are

aspects of life that must be addressed. These dimensions of community life (any many others) constitute the context within which the children grow and learn. Human beings dwell in the social context of their lives as a fish dwells in water. To try to take individuals out of that context in order to teach how to better live their lives in that context will only undermine the human development process. An essential dynamic of that process is a perpetual dialogue between the individual and the social context of his life.

The school, in such a human development process, must become a community learning centre. It can no longer remain the foreign institution of colonialization that it has been in the past. The boundaries of the community learning program cannot remain the walls of the school building. Every aspect of the collective and individual lives of people in the community must be touched by a process of community learning for community development.

It will not be possible to effectively address alcohol and drug abuse in Native communities through sporadic propaganda efforts in schools or in the community. The problem lies deeper than that. Alcohol and drug abuse are the symptoms of a fundamental cultural sickness that alienates the hearts and minds of individual Native people from themselves, from their loved ones, and from their communities.

Only when fathers and mothers and elders and older sisters and brothers are learning for better health, more unified families, more viable local economies, and for a greater measure of control over the process of community transformation, only then will the context that makes alcohol and drug abuse a problem begin to disappear. Then a revolution in the education of children will have a profound and lasting effect on the entire life process of the community for generations to come.

Education and development literature from around the world, reflecting years of attempts to address major social problems through school reforms, are very clear on one point. Changing schools alone does not change society, but a process of community development integrated with curriculum transformation has proven to be an extremely effective measure for bringing about societal transformation <u>if</u> those changes are directed and controlled by the people who are themselves the subjects of the change process.

It is therefore an extremely important feature of a wholistic curriculum that the process of generating the curriculum begin in the community. That process must be paralleled by transformation in the teaching and learning activities in the school so that: a) changes in the community life are reflected in the school; and, b) discoveries made in the school may be applied to the ongoing development of life

in the community.

Figure 1 suggests how the process of generating a school curriculum based on a wholistic vision of human beings is both a community development process and school process. The drawing presents a model of how the various processes are related to each other. From the drawing it becomes clear that the family and its well-being must be a major focus of initial efforts to integrate community and school in a single process.

The Family and a Wholistic Curriculum

Because the family is the foundation institution of any society, working directly with families becomes one of the most important first steps in the actual curriculum development process. The following are examples of what steps can be taken during the first phase of a community education process.

1. Infants and Children -- Day care facilities can be established in the school and integrated with the school program. This will make it possible for mothers to participate in personal development activities, to contribute to ongoing school and community life, and to learn how to be more effective parents. It will also permit older

A new vision of human possibility

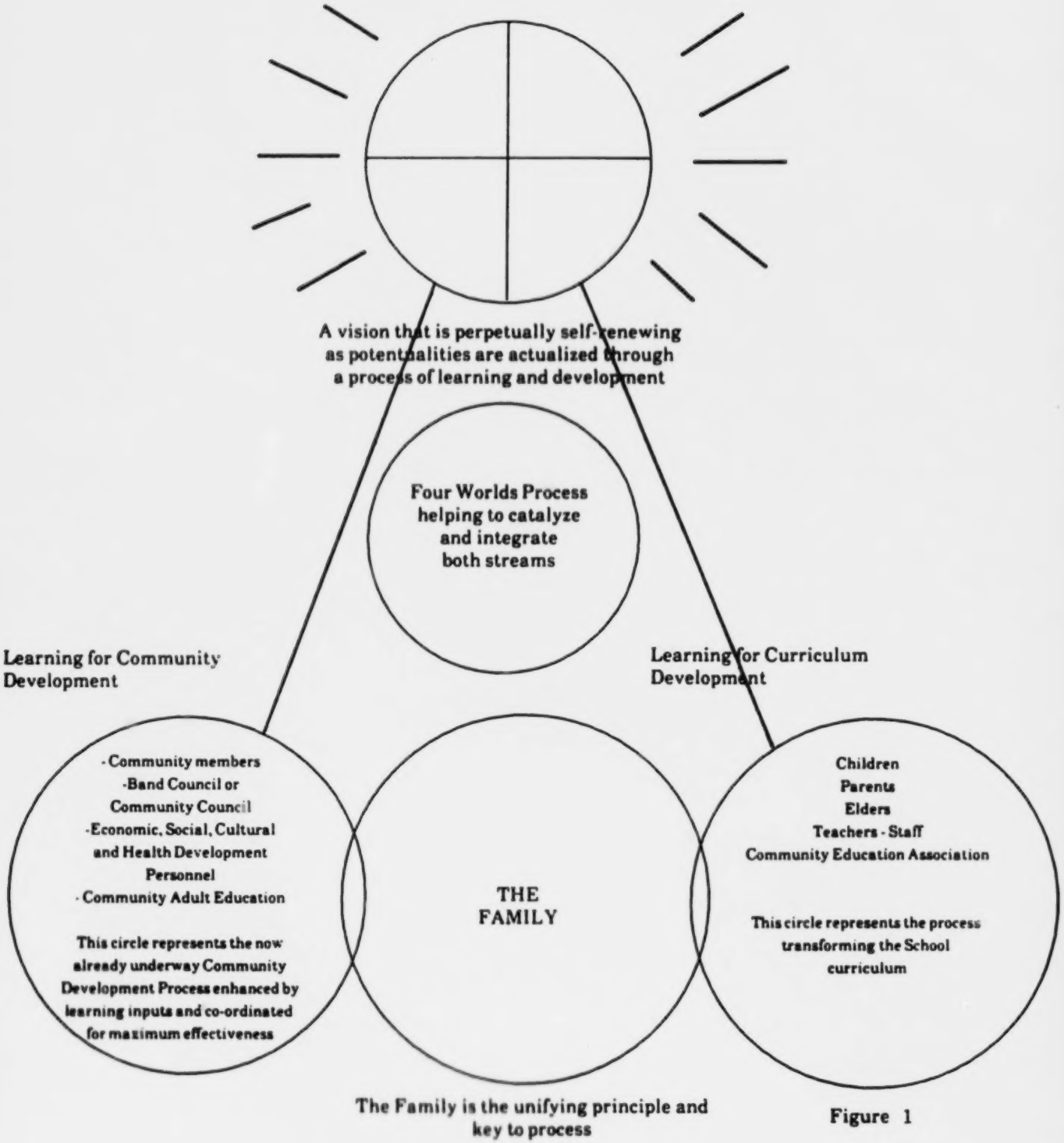
A vision that is perpetually self-renewing as potentialities are actualized through a process of learning and development
Four Worlds Process helping to catalyze and integrate both streams
Learning for Community Development
Learning for Curriculum Development
- Community members
-Band Council or Community Council
-Economic, Social, Cultural and Health Development Personnel
- Community Adult Education
This circle represents the now already underway Community Development Process enhanced by learning inputs and co-ordinated for maximum effectiveness
THE FAMILY
Children
Parents
Elders
Teachers - Staff
Community Education Association
This circle represents the process transforming the School curriculum
The Family is the unifying principle and key to process

Figure 1

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Imagine a circle divided into four parts by directional arrows. This is a universal symbol that all indigenous peoples recognize and understand immediately. The centre of that circle is the family, and at the heart of it is the woman. Just as Mother Earth is the core of life, so the woman as mother is the core of her family. The family sits in a circle, and that circle is called a clan. The clans in turn also sit in a circle, and that circle is called a nation. Then these nations sit in a circle, and that is called the world. Finally, there is the universe, which is the largest of the circles. The symbolism is meaningful, and it is important. It belongs not only to indigenous people but to all people. Eventually, I think, all peoples will begin to realize the importance of that particular symbol, the circle and the four quarters.

Oren Lyons (Iroquois)

children to learn (by doing) how to care for young children, including dressing, grooming and anticipating basic needs, as well as to gain specific knowledge of child development and nutrition. These things can be taught with immediate feedback to families in the community.

2. A Family Development Program can be instituted, focusing on home visits to pregnant women and young mothers to address the issue of solvent abuse, and nutrition as these relate to child development. An infant stimulation program can also be instituted to offset the harmful effects that come to children whose parents, for whatever reasons, are not providing the precious children entrusted to them by the Creator with the stimulation and nourishment needed to ensure the normal unfolding of human potential. At present, an estimated sixty percent of all Native children first entering school are handicapped by a lack of normal development of spirit, mind or body. Often these deficiencies can be corrected, but all too often it is too late. It is urgent that a comprehensive approach to human development begin while the child is still in the womb of its mother. Clearly there is no way to do this if a

program does not integrate school life with family and community life.

We have come full circle. We began as does traditional Native education, with our roots firmly planted in the soil culture. This soil, in the living social context, is our family (and more especially, our mother) and our community. What we have said is that we cannot live and learn uprooted from that soil. We have said that in order to build a new learning program for our communities, we must retain and firmly root ourselves in the soil out of which we have come.

Questions to think about:

1. Describe the content and process of the traditional curriculum of your people (how people learned what they needed to know in order to lead successful, productive lives). What place does this traditional curriculum have in your community today?

2. What are current child-raising practices in your community teaching children about human nature, human potential, and native culture?

3. What is the role of the school in a wholistic curriculum?

4. How does a wholistic view of curriculum differ from the view currently held by many of our educators? Is the school program in your community offering a wholistic approach to human learning?

5. How can a wholistic curriculum contribute to the elimination and prevention of alcohol and drug abuse?

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